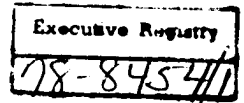


The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

Det
M. B. J.



14 March 1978

Dear Bill,

Enjoyed reading the script of your recent show with Frank Snepp. I much appreciated the kind words you had to say about me.

One area in which you were concerned that I might have been off the track was in my comments on the value of Snepp's book. If I might refresh you on this, Snepp provided you a quotation as to what I had said at Yale as reported in The Hartford Courant:

"I haven't read Snepp's book, but I'm not really interested in learning the history of what went wrong there in Vietnam, because I don't think it will be repeated. Mr. Snepp's book is a piece of history that is not particularly relevant and Mr. Snepp is not qualified to tell it."

What I actually said as taken down on our own tape recorders at the meeting was:

"I have not read the book. I'm told it is well written. I'm told that it has some good information about the evacuation. I don't think anyone would question that the evacuation was not done in an ideal manner. Let me tell you that Mr. Snepp, who wrote it, was thirty-two years old at the time and had been with us for six years, was not the senior CIA official in Vietnam as he has portrayed himself. He was a rather junior one. While there were mistakes made in that evacuation, I do not believe that Mr. Snepp was in a position to judge well whether the mistakes were made in Washington, in the Embassy, the CIA, or where in that process. Anytime somebody writes a criticism of us I must pay attention to it if it's reasonably well expressed and sounds like it has some merit. But of all the criticisms we have received, this is one that I'm not as interested in as others. I'm interested in them all because what I want to learn is not how to flagellate myself for what the CIA did in the past but how to avoid what might be a repetition. The last thing I see on the horizon of CIA today is a massive evacuation of Vietnam or any other country. So I'm not really intent on learning the lesson of what went wrong there because I don't think it's going to be replicated. I don't want to denigrate Mr. Snepp and his effort, but it's

copy to Mr. O. S. Turner

Buckley

a piece of history that I'm not finding terribly relevant and I don't think he is particularly qualified for it."

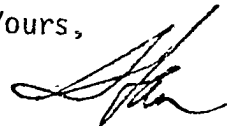
In short, I do hold Snepp's book in a somewhat lesser regard than perhaps you do, but I certainly do not want to ignore any lessons that we can learn from previous malperformance. I simply weight my priorities, however, and am not presently placing high emphasis on how we can conduct a major evacuation.

I did, in my response, slight what I believe is the other major lesson of Snepp's book: the accusation that our reporting on Vietnam was biased in support of the Ambassador. This is a serious charge and one we must take as a present lesson. I have gone into Snepp's allegation in some depth. I am persuaded that Snepp's view of it is far from clear or impartial. You should know, for instance, that shortly before leaving Vietnam Snepp wrote a memorandum of record praising his Chief of Station, Polgar, for the forthright way in which he stood tall with a position independent of that of the Ambassador. I have also spoken with some impartial witnesses such as a Senator who visited with both Ambassador Martin and Tom Polgar in the waning months of Vietnam and affirmed how clearly Polgar stood on his own convictions. The Agency did do a thorough study of this general accusation at the very time that Snepp was still in the organization and interviewed Snepp in the process. I have reviewed that study and believe that it validates the fact that there was not a major shortcoming here.

Sorry to take up so much of your time with this--just wanted to set the record straight.

Thanks again, and I do hope that we can get together again one of these days. In the meantime, all the best to you and Pat.

Yours,



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